

Key Findings of the First Assessment of the Delhi Voucher Project

Centre for Civil Society (CCS) launched India's first School Voucher Project, the 'Delhi School Voucher Project', on 28 March 2007 as part of the School Choice Campaign. To understand the effect of School Choice, school vouchers worth up to Rs. 3,600 per year per child were awarded to 408 students from 68 wards in Delhi. The vouchers will be provided for a minimum of three years.

After the completion of the first year of the Delhi Voucher Project, an independent assessment of the Project was planned. The primary objective was to ascertain whether the parents' attitude towards education had changed and what kind of 'school choice' they exercised after receiving the vouchers. In addition, CCS wanted to gain some insight on the academic achievements of voucher students during the first voucher year and how well they performed compared to children studying in private and Government schools. Moreover, it was also intended to uncover possible implementation problems of the project. To these ends, the Centre for Media Studies (CMS), New Delhi, was appointed to conduct the study.

THE MAIN FINDINGS

- Overall, the voucher students have performed better than those studying in Government schools and at par with the students in private schools in English, Mathematics and Hindi in all grades.
- The study found that the majority (63.1 percent) of the voucher beneficiaries exercised the freedom of choice after receiving the school voucher and switched over from a government to a private school.

- A majority of the parents of the voucher beneficiaries and the parents of students attending private schools (70.8 and 73 percent respectively) liked the teaching methods employed in their children's schools. A comparatively smaller percentage (52.6 percent) of the parents of students attending Government schools liked their teaching methods.
- A majority of parents of the voucher beneficiaries (74.5 percent) and the parents

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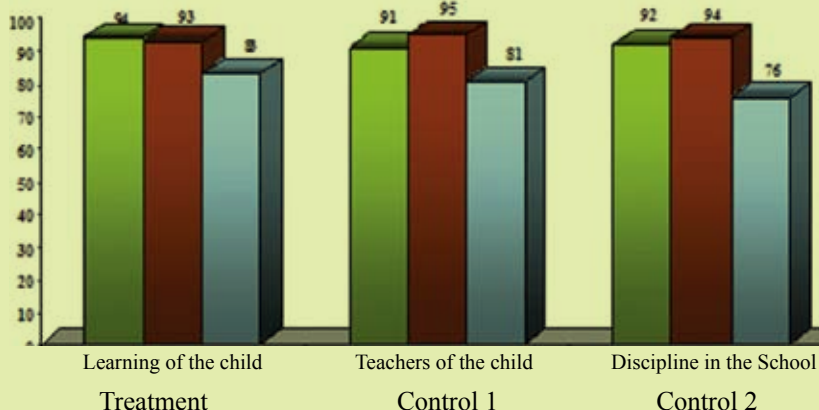
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of students attending private schools (70.5 percent) found no weaknesses in the schools where their children were currently enrolled. However, only 45.6 percent of the parents of students attending government schools shared a similar point of view.

6. Around 15-16 percent of the parents of the voucher beneficiaries and the parents of students attending private schools respectively reported inadequate infrastructure in their children's schools. However, 28 percent of the parents of students attending government schools reported inadequate infrastructure in their children's schools.

7. A high majority (94 percent) of the voucher parents mentioned that their children were happy with their present school. 61 percent of the voucher parents felt that their children had also become more regular with school work. More than fifty percent of the voucher parents noticed that their children had become more disciplined and studied more in their new school.

Fig 1: Parents' satisfaction levels with:



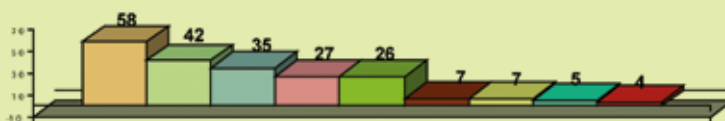
Treatment Category: Students who have received school vouchers: 371 children.

Control Category 1: Students from the same school and grade but who did not receive school vouchers: 371 children.

Control Category 2: Students from the neighbourhood Government schools and Aangan Wadi Centres (pre-primary classes) but who did not receive school vouchers: 371 children.

- More than 90 percent of the parents of the voucher beneficiaries, now attending private schools, were happy with the academic progress of their children, their teachers and the standard of discipline in the schools. A comparatively lesser percentage of the parents of students attending government schools were happy with the learning progress of their children (83.1 percent), the teachers (80.9 percent) and the standard of discipline in the schools (75.5 percent).

Fig 2: Voucher parents' opinion: Difference between the previous and the present school of the voucher child (in %):



- More teaching activity
- Regular homework
- Knowledge/usage of English
- More disciplined
- Higher teacher attendance
- Ensuring attendance of child
- School's positive to your concerns
- More cleanliness
- No change

SCHOOL CHOICE CAMPAIGN NATIONAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Delhi Voucher Project: First Assessment Report



(L-R) Baladevan R, Dr. Parth J Shah, Arvinder Singh Lovely, Prof. PV Indiresan

8. All parents of all three student categories expressed their intention to educate their children up to at least standard 10 with many wanting to continue their education up to higher secondary level and above. The parents want their children to ultimately become professionals such as doctors, engineers and teachers. Like their parents, the students too aspire to similar ambitions.

9. A high majority (nearly 90 percent) of the voucher students and those attending private schools perceived that being educated in their present schools would provide them with opportunities for a better life and future. In comparison, a lesser percentage (61 percent) of children attending government schools had the same opinion.

10. More than 50 percent of the voucher parents declared that if the school voucher payments were stopped, their children would have to go back to government schools.

Over the years, India has tried varied approaches to improve enrolments and the quality of school education. As the latest Pratham survey shows, there is a huge gap between our aspirations and actual achievements. The Delhi Voucher Project is an experiment which is testing how school choice can help poor children attending government schools to improve their learning levels. This study has provided evidence that 'choice' when exercised can assist students from weaker economic backgrounds to learn better.

The complete report is available at <http://schoolchoice.in/events/DVPFirstAssessmentReport.pdf>

FACTSHEET

1.) Teacher Attendance 2007 (Rural India)
Teachers attending (average)

Std. 1-4/5: 91 % Std. 1-8: 87.4 %

Schools with no teacher present:

Std. 1-4/5: 0.2 % Std. 1-8: 0.2 %

Schools with all teachers present:

Std. 1-4/5: 73.7 % Std. 1-8: 53.5 %

2.) Enrollment in private schools is increasing

Among all 6-14 year olds, the proportion of children attending private schools has increased from 16.4% in 2005 to 22.5% in 2008. This increase in private school enrollment represents a 37.2 percent increase over the baseline of 2005. This increase is particularly striking in Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Source: ASER Report 2008 (<http://www.pratham.org/aser08/aser08.pdf>)

SCC organized The Case for Right to Education of Choice: Key Findings from the Delhi Voucher Project to officially release the Delhi Voucher Project First Assessment Report at the India Islamic Cultural Centre on 19 February 2009. The report was released by Hon'ble Education Minister of Delhi, Mr Arvinder Singh Lovely in the presence of the media, voucher school principals, noted academicians, SCC supporters and relevant members of the Delhi state government.

"The improvement experienced by government schools is largely because of good officials, we don't know how long this will last. The Voucher idea is very good. In the future, students will have to be funded instead of schools. The Delhi government will use the voucher idea soon to help poor parents to cope with increase in fees as a result of the recommendations of the Sixth Pay Commission." said Hon'ble Minister Lovely.

Dr Parth J Shah, President, CCS made a presentation on the School Choice Campaign and the Delhi Voucher Project, Mr Alok Srivastava, Research Director of CMS Social at Centre for Media Studies made a presentation on the key findings of the Delhi Voucher Project and Former Director of IIT Madras and School Choice Ambassador Prof P V Indiresan spoke about the great potential of vouchers in ensuring accountability. Presenting the voucher school principals perspective on School Choice were Mr V K Puri, Principal, Shishu Mangal Public School and Mr Ramswaroop Sharma, Principal, Sharda Vidya Kendra.

As part of our Delhi campaign, SCC and Shiksha, a renowned NGO, collected 2, 80, 000 signature petitions from parents demanding school from 68 wards of Delhi in 2007. These petitions were also presented to the Hon'ble Minister requesting him to act upon the demand from the people.

The report is available at http://www.schoolchoice.in/events/20090219_delhivoucher.php



Delhi School Voucher Principals Forums organized

Two 'Delhi School Voucher Principals Forums' were organized on 5 February and 10 February 2009 to

bring school principals under the umbrella of the School Choice Alliance. The events saw participation from nearly twenty school principals across Central, West and East Delhi. All participating principals expressed a desire to come together in order to present a collective voice that will bring the concerns of private budget schools to the attention of the Delhi Government. In addition, all principals pledged support for the School Choice Campaign.

Other school principals interested in joining the School Choice Alliance may contact Manu (manu@ccs.in)

Action for School Admission Reforms (ASAR) Launched

The School Choice Campaign and www.nurseryadmissions.com launched a new initiative, Action for School Admission Reforms (ASAR) to help parents and concerned others tackle the undue stress imposed upon them during the admission season by schools with myopic viewpoints. ASAR is a helpdesk for parents to lodge complaints, even anonymously, against unscrupulous schools through dedicated helpline numbers, email and websites www.schoolchoice.in and www.nurseryadmissions.com. All complaints are forwarded to the DoE at regular intervals to build pressure upon it to take necessary action against the schools.

For details on ASAR log on to: <http://www.schoolchoice.in/nurseryadmission/>

CCS wins PIL on school admission in Delhi High Court

The government of Delhi issued a circular to the schools, giving guidelines for carrying out the admissions. In the matter of the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by the Centre for Civil Society seeking the Court's intervention to ensure compliance by schools of the government regulations for nursery admissions, the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi has passed an order today agreeing with the contentions of the petitioner.

Successful meeting with the Delhi Education Minister

Parth J Shah, President, CCS and Baladevan R, Associate Director, SCC met with the Delhi Education Minister Arvinder Singh Lovely to discuss education reform ideas and suggestions mainly for the underprivileged and underserved sections of our society, to facilitate Delhi to be a model state for school education. The minister expressed the desire that School Choice should provide recommendations for reforms in nursery admissions and was supportive of other ideas discussed in the meeting. SCC is planning various projects for the State government as part of our initiative to improve quality educational opportunities for all children in Delhi.

Street Theatre advocacy for School Choice

School Choice Campaign and Art Venture have jointly organized street plays advocating School Choice philosophy to the people in eight districts of Orissa and 13 districts of Rajasthan. Each district has witnessed 15 street theatre performances. These performances have drawn large audiences, thereby taking School Choice ideas closer to the people and local government leaders.

For details log on to

http://schoolchoice.in/events/200810_artventure.php



CCS Suggestions on the RTE Bill 2008

Centre for Civil Society proposed 6 short changes in the current Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill 2008. The suggestions were circulated widely to the media, development organizations, various ministries including the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Chambers of Commerce and individual activists.

For further details <http://www.schoolchoice.in/suggestionsforrtebill2008.php>

Media Outreach Programs

The past quarter has seen a huge increase in our media visibility, and publicity through print, electronic, radio and website has become an integral part of our project design and planning. We have had over 25 media coverage in leading national dailies, television channels and radio in the past couple of month in Delhi alone. Parth J Shah, President CCS and Baladevan R, Associate Director, SCC have been invited as guest speakers on various programs on NDTV, Lok Sabha Channel, DD News, CNN IBN, NDTV Metronation, ZEE, and Air Rainbow respectively. Hindustan Times carried an exclusive on the Delhi Voucher Project.

For media enquiries contact Baishali at baishali@ccs.in

Q & A

What if the school is situated far from where the children stay? Would vouchers still help the children?

Vouchers are financial instruments that can serve other purposes as well. In remote areas a transport subsidy component can be worked in. It is also a strong possibility that if vouchers were to be awarded to all the children at a remote location; a private edupreneur may setup a school there. The obvious incentive would be the purchasing power of the students, but if it results in a new school, vouchers would have served their purpose.

Presentation on SCC in Bhubaneswor

Baladevan R, Associate Director made a presentation on the School Choice Campaign on the occasion of the 5th Odiya Prabasi Diwas on 21 December 08 in the presence of several ministers and experts from the health, education, environment and tourism sectors. School Choice ideas on various ways to develop Orissa's social infrastructure were presented before the government and the non resident Odiyas.

School Choice Research for Advocacy in Orissa

Our various experts have completed their research papers on Financing Elementary Education in Orissa - Per Child Cost, Increasing Access to Early Schooling for the Underprivileged and Standards for A School Towards Quality Education.

Write To Us

I had a look at the School Choice Campaign website. I must congratulate you on promoting such a brilliant idea. The school voucher system is a transparent system and should be supported by the Delhi Education Ministry. Surprisingly when I spoke to my mother about it, she hardly knows much about it although she has been teaching Hindi for the past two decades. It should be promoted in all government schools of Delhi through a right medium and must ensure the support of teachers and school authority. This campaign needs media attention and I am sure people will realize the benefits of this system. Kudos to your team for putting the effort behind it! I have signed the petition and I wish the best for its success. - Rajat Rathi

Please send in your feedback at studentfirst@ccs.in

School Choice Campaign's Current Initiative

In the lead up to this year's Lok Sabha elections, the School Choice team has been advocating our ideas to representatives across the political spectrum. Information on School Choice ideas and their implementation has already been sent to over 130 sitting Members of Parliament. In addition, targeted initiatives have been launched to reach out to all potential candidates in Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand. The School Choice team has also planned to attend election campaign events in Delhi and Jharkhand to spread awareness of the School Choice Campaign among the electorate.

Through direct engagement, media outreach programs and voter insistence, School Choice ideas will be brought to the fore of the electioneering process in April and May 2009.

If you want to support our advocacy campaign contact Manu at manu@ccs.in



SUPPORT SCHOOL CHOICE CAMPAIGN

All successful campaigns depend on good people and execution. We welcome ideas, participation, and financial assistance from all well wishers to give millions of children in India a quality education of their Choice. For details on how you can support and join us, log onto www.schoolchoice.in or email at joinus@schoolchoice.in

For volunteering opportunities log onto <http://schoolchoice.in/support/volunteer.php> or email at vol@ccs.in

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